

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
February 2, 2017

NAPA RIVER OAKVILLE TO OAK KNOLL RESTORATION PROJECT: SITE 13

Project No. 16-053-01
Project Manager: Jessica Davenport

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,000,000 to the County of Napa to restore Site 13 on the Napa River to enhance long-term river and floodplain function, improve habitat and water quality, and reduce property damage through bank stabilization.

LOCATION: Between the Oakville Cross Road Bridge and the Oak Knoll Avenue Bridge, County of Napa

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Project Design](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Project Photographs](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [Napa River Restoration: Oakville to Oak Knoll Project Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan](#)
 - Exhibit 5: [Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration](#)
 - Exhibit 6: [Project Letters](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the County of Napa to restore Site 13 (the “project”) of the Oakville to Oak Knoll Project located along the Napa River, subject to the following conditions:

1. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed for the project until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has reviewed and approved in writing:
 - a. A final work plan, including a budget and schedule.
 - b. The name and qualifications of any contractors that the County of Napa intends to retain to carry out the project.
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- c. A signage plan that acknowledges Conservancy funding.
 - d. A written agreement between the County of Napa and the landowners allowing the project to be implemented, maintained, and monitored.
2. The County of Napa shall provide evidence that all necessary permits and approvals have been obtained.
3. The County of Napa shall ensure implementation of all mitigation measures for the project described in the Napa River Restoration: Oakville to Oak Knoll Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the *Napa River Restoration: Oakville to Oak Knoll Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)* (SCH # 2014012057) adopted by the County of Napa on April 16, 2015 (attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 5). The Conservancy finds that the Oakville to Oak Knoll Project as mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of insignificance and there is no substantial evidence that the Oakville to Oak Knoll Project, as mitigated, will have a significant effect on the environment.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize a grant of up to one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the County of Napa to restore Site 13 within the Oakville to Oak Knoll (OVOK) Project, located along a 9-mile reach of the Napa River between the Oakville Cross Road Bridge and the Oak Knoll Avenue Bridge.

The overall objective of the OVOK Project is to restore habitat and water quality, including spawning and rearing habitat for Chinook salmon and steelhead. The collaborative effort among private landowners, the County of Napa, Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Napa County Resource Conservation District, and others is designed to meet multiple objectives: in addition to restoring important floodplain function to benefit steelhead and salmon, the project will stabilize the river’s banks, thus preventing additional erosion and associated water quality and property damage.

The 9-mile OVOK Project Reach has been divided into four Construction Groups A-D encompassing 23 distinct restoration sites (Exhibit 1). Implementing construction of the entire OVOK Project would restore up to 83 acres of transitional riparian and aquatic habitat and

reduce fine sediment loading from channel erosion. Construction of Group A (Sites 21-23) is underway and will be completed in 2017. Groups B and D are currently in the design stage. Group C is comprised of restoration sites 11-14 (Exhibit 2). Construction of Site 14, across the river from Site 13, is partially complete. The proposed project consists of implementation of Site 13. Construction of Group C is expected to be complete by 2018.

Construction of Site 13 will result in 15 acres of restoration. Five acres of vineyard will be removed and combined with two acres of additional land to create wetland and floodplain features totaling seven acres (Exhibit 3). The remaining eight acres of restoration includes channel enhancements, riparian expansion, nature-based streambank stabilization, revegetation, and management of non-native vegetation. The river channel will be widened by 160-210 feet with removal of 171,900 cubic yards of fine sediment from eroding banks over 3,000 linear river feet. A total of three new floodplain benches will be created and the project area will be revegetated with native riparian vegetation. Instream habitat enhancement features will be installed. The channel will be reconfigured with additional boulders and gravel to enhance the riffle-pool morphology within the project area and reduce the partial barrier to upstream migration of Chinook salmon. The proposed project site consists of privately owned property. All private landowners within the OVOK Project reach are providing funds to support the long-term monitoring and maintenance of the OVOK Project through the OVOK Community Facilities District.

The County is qualified to undertake this project because the staff has implemented projects to protect, enhance, or restore the Napa River, its floodplain, and watershed since the 1990s. The County has extensive experience working collaboratively with landowners, stakeholders, project partners and consultants to successfully complete similar projects, such as the Rutherford Restoration Project, which was previously funded by the Conservancy and was completed in 2015. See “Project History” section below for details.

Site Description: The project is located in the mid-reaches of the Napa River, which is one of the few large watersheds in the San Francisco Bay Area which has not been significantly urbanized and supports a wide range of wildlife and habitats. The OVOK Project-Restoration Group C is comprised of restoration sites 11-14. The County is in the process of completing construction of Site 14. All the sites are located on private property and are on agricultural parcels. The proposed project is restoration of Site 13.

Site 13 includes the left bank of the Napa River, which exhibits moderate bank erosion and a poorly connected floodplain. A second parallel channel marks the eastern edge of this site (Exhibit 2). The secondary channel is broad, shallow and vegetated with wetland and riparian plants. Site 13 and Site 14 (located immediately across the river) comprise one of the most incised reaches on the Napa River, with banks that are twice as steep as the average for the Oakville to Oak Knoll reach. Incision has been partially arrested by riprap under the Yountville Cross Road bridge, creating an approximately 2-foot high step that is a partial barrier to fish passage during typical fall base flow conditions. The partial barrier has a negative effect on Chinook salmon populations because they spawn in this reach, which has low quality spawning habitat and a large population of predatory pike minnow, rather than migrating further upstream to areas where spawning conditions are more favorable.

Site 13 is being constructed on the Missimer Families’ property, a portion of which was put into a conservation easement with the Land Trust of Napa County. A new road will be constructed on

a historic road site on the property. County of Napa staff will work with the landowner to design an unpaved trail from the new road to the site, and the Land Trust will provide educational tours of the site once or twice a year, possibly in partnership with the Napa Resource Conservation District. It should be noted that public access to a very similar site is available immediately upstream of Site 13 at CDFW's 73-acre Napa River Ecological Reserve, which provides opportunities for wildlife viewing, fishing, and hiking (Attachment 1).

Project History: The Conservancy has had a long history of involvement in the restoration of the Napa River. In 1996, the Conservancy funded technical studies for the lower reach (between the City of Napa and the river mouth), which resulted in development of a multi-objective flood management plan that follows the "living river" principle. This plan replaced a US Army Corps of Engineers trapezoidal concrete channel design that regulatory agency staff and others contended would have no benefit to natural resources, and little benefit to the community other than flood control.

The Conservancy has since funded two property acquisitions to implement flood management and habitat improvements recommended in the plan, as well as several watershed assessments within the Napa River watershed that have led to projects on private lands to reduce erosion and sedimentation and improve instream and adjacent habitat. The Conservancy has also recently funded a study of high-priority fish passage barriers in the Napa River basin and a historical ecology assessment of the Napa Valley. Conservancy-funded restoration has included the Zinfandel Bridge Fish Passage Project, the Rutherford Restoration Project and the Greenwood Avenue Culvert and Fish Passage Project. Additionally, since the 1990s, the Conservancy has been involved with the acquisition and large-scale restoration of the Napa-Sonoma marshes at the mouth of the river.

The OVOK Project is located immediately downstream from the Rutherford Project and provides continuity with the upstream restoration efforts. In 2007, the California Land Stewardship Institute (CLSI) received funding from the California State Water Resources Control Board and the County of Napa (Measure A) to prepare an enhancement plan for the Oakville to Oak Knoll reach of the Napa River. The Napa River Restoration: Oakville to Oak Knoll Final Concept Plan (Concept Plan) was developed by CLSI in 2011. In 2012 the County of Napa hired a team led by ESA PWA to advance the conceptual design to final design. The design team considered the result of the Concept Plan's project ranking and alternatives analysis and developed a Basis of Design (BOD) document to guide final design work for 23 restoration sites. The BOD provides the rationale, assumptions, and performance criteria for the OVOK Project restoration elements (channel widening, floodplain restoration, nature-based streambank stabilization, restoration, in-stream habitat features, gravel augmentation, etc.). It provides a series of hypotheses for how the design elements will function and meet the project goals, and a series of tests to measure whether this has occurred.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,000,000
County of Napa Measure A Watershed Improvement Tax Fund	\$800,000
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	\$1,000,000
SF Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board	\$800,000
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$1,000,000 (pending)

Project Total

\$4,600,000

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the fiscal year 2015/16 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1, Water Code Section 79700 et seq.). Funds appropriated to the Conservancy derive from Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 79730) and may be used “for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state” (Section 79731). Section 79732 identifies specific purposes of Chapter 6, which include: protect and restore aquatic, wetland, and migratory bird ecosystems, including fish and wildlife corridors; protect and restore coastal watersheds, including, but not limited to bays, marine estuaries, and nearshore ecosystems; and assist in the recovery of endangered, threatened or migratory species by improving watershed health, instream flows, fish passage and coastal or inland wetland restoration.

The proposed project helps achieve the above-identified Chapter 6 purposes and provides multiple benefits. By restoring floodplain and channel form and function, the project will restore historic access to spawning and rearing habitat and improve water quality by reducing erosion.

The proposed project was selected through a competitive grant process under the Conservancy’s Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines adopted in June 2015 (“Prop 1 Guidelines”). (See Section 79706(a)). The proposed project meets each of the evaluation criteria in the Prop 1 Guidelines as described in further detail in this “Project Financing” section, the “Project Summary” section and in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines” section of this report.

The County of Napa is fully funding design and permitting-related tasks and provides matching funds for implementation of restoration projects through Measure A watershed improvement sales tax funds. OVOK Landowners are providing funds to support the long-term monitoring and maintenance of the project through the OVOK Community Facilities District.

The County already has received grants from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Watershed Restoration Grant Program and San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board Non-Point Source Grant Program listed above. The County has also requested \$1,000,000 from the Wildlife Conservation Board Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program. If the final grant application is unsuccessful, the County will re-program local funding generated by the Measure A sales tax to ensure that construction moves forward in 2017.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area to help achieve stated goals.

Consistent with Section 31162(b), the proposed project will help “to protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance.” The County of Napa intends to restore habitat and beneficial uses, including spawning and rearing habitat for Chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

Consistent with Section 31163(c), the project is 1) supported by adopted regional plans, including the Regional Water Quality Control Board’s Napa River Sediment TMDL and the *San*

Francisco Estuary Watershed Evaluation: Identifying Promising Locations for Steelhead Restoration in Tributaries of the San Francisco Estuary (CEMAR, 2007); 2) is regionally significant in terms of the riparian and riverine habitat restoration potential; 3) can be implemented in a timely way, as the funding for the restoration has been secured; 4) provides an opportunity to restore a significant property that could be lost if grant funding is not used; and 5) includes local matching funds from County of Napa's Measure A sales tax, and may include additional state grant funds if outstanding applications are successful.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED JUNE 25, 2015:**

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective 11F** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the project will enhance riparian and riverine habitat and other watershed functions and processes for the benefit of wildlife and water quality.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** The proposed acquisition project serves to promote and implement several state plans and policies, including:
 - *Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan* (California Natural Resources Agency, 2014). The OVOK Project is consistent with *Safeguarding California's* recommendation to improve habitat connectivity and protect climate refugia.
 - *California Water Action Plan* (California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and California Environmental Protection Agency, 2016). The OVOK Project is consistent with the action to protect and restore important ecosystems, including efforts to implement large-scale habitat projects along the California coast in strategic coastal estuaries to restore ecological health and natural system connectivity.
 - *Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California* (California Department of Fish and Game, 1996). The OVOK Project is consistent with strategies in the plan, including restoring degraded habitat.
4. **Support of the public:** Implementation of OVOK Project Group C is a collaborative effort between the County of Napa, Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Napa County Resource Conservation District, Land Trust of Napa County, ESA PWA and

Group C landowners including Silverado Vineyards, Treasury Wine Estates, Missimer Family, and Traina Family. It is also supported by Friends of the Napa River, Rutherford Dust Society, Watershed Information Center & Conservancy of Napa County, and Oakville Winegrowers. Collaborating public agencies included in the design review and development process are the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, CDFW, USACE, and EPA. Elected officials supporting the project include Napa County Supervisor Diane Dillion, California State Assembly Member Bill Dodd, Senator Lois Wolk, and Congressman Mike Thompson.

5. **Location:** The project is located in the County of Napa, within the jurisdiction of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
6. **Need:** Conservancy funds are needed to supplement dwindling local funds generated by the Measure A sales tax, which will expire in 2018.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Napa River has been identified by the Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration as one of eight “anchor watersheds” with the highest restoration potential for steelhead trout in the San Francisco Bay Area.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** This project is not vulnerable to sea level rise because it is located far above the range of current and projected future tidal influence.

Additional Criteria

10. **Resolution of more than one issue:** In addition to restoring important floodplain function to benefit steelhead and salmon, the project will stabilize the river banks, thus preventing additional erosion and associated water quality and property damage.
11. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
13. **Innovation:** The project utilizes a range of innovative technical analyses and the latest developments in geomorphic science to reinstate physical and hydraulic processes that are linked to aquatic habitat complexity.
14. **Readiness:** The grantee has completed CEQA documentation, the project is at 65% design, local funds are available to supplement Conservancy funds, and the grantee expects to have all necessary permits in time to start construction in 2017.
15. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
16. **Return to Conservancy:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
17. **Cooperation:** This is a collaborative effort among private landowners, the County of Napa, Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Napa County Resource Conservation District, and others. As described above, OVOK Landowners are providing funds to support the long-term monitoring and maintenance of the Project through the OVOK Community Facilities District.
18. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The implementation of OVOK Group C will expand the river’s riparian corridor and enhance native species diversity (grasses, sedges, shrubs and trees), creating more resilience to a range of future hydrologic and temperature conditions for both riparian and aquatic species.

19. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** Through the installation of native riparian vegetation, the project will have the potential to sequester carbon at a higher rate than current site conditions allow. Mitigation Measure AQ-1, developed to reduce NOx emissions, would also reduce the project's carbon emissions. This measure requires that equipment idling times shall be minimized and construction equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturer's specifications.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the County of Napa, as lead agency, prepared the "*Napa River Restoration: Oakville to Oak Knoll Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration*" (IS/MND) (SCH # 2014012057). On April 16, 2015, the County of Napa adopted the IS/MND (Exhibit 5).

The IS/MND identified potentially significant impacts of the OVOK Project in the areas of aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, transportation and traffic, and cumulative impacts. The IS/MND also identified mitigation measures that would avoid impacts, or reduce them below the level of significance, such that the OVOK Project would not result in significant adverse impacts on the environment. A majority of the impacts are short-term and associated with the construction phase of the OVOK Project. Over the long term, the OVOK Project would benefit the Napa River's hydrology/hydraulic function, riparian and aquatic resources, and the species that depend on them. Potential OVOK Project impacts and relevant mitigations include:

Aesthetics: OVOK Project construction would result in some temporary visual disruption of local viewsheds due to vegetation removal, earthwork, construction staging, and other project activities. To avoid or reduce these adverse visual effects, Napa County will require contractors to: maintain work and staging areas in a clean, orderly condition at all times; store equipment and materials in construction staging areas and/or away from public view; and remove any debris not slated for onsite reuse promptly at regular intervals. Signs posted for the OVOK Project will include the name and contact information for the County staff person serving as the designated visual disturbance coordinator, who will respond to any public complaints and take steps to correct problems.

Air Quality: The principal concern about the effect of construction projects on air quality relates to the potential for earthwork and other activities to generate dust, including inhalable particulate matter that poses a human health hazard. To reduce the potential impact of dust generation on human health to less than significant levels, Napa County has included a measure requiring OVOK Project contractors to implement dust control best management practices (BMPs) consistent with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's guidelines.

In addition, short-term tailpipe emissions could create a concern, particularly with construction occurring in close proximity to residences, wineries, and other facilities. To reduce these short-term impacts to less than a significant level, idling times shall be minimized either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the maximum idling time to 5 minutes (as required by the California airborne toxics control measure Title 13, Section 2485 of California Code of Regulations). Napa County will post a publicly visible

sign with the telephone number and person to contact at the lead agency regarding dust complaints. This person shall respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The Air District's phone number shall also be visible to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

Biological Resources: The construction phase of the OVOK Project could potentially have a substantial adverse effect on special status species and riparian habitat or could interfere with the wildlife corridors. To reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels, steps will be taken to minimize impacts to California freshwater shrimp during channel dewatering; the County will construct California freshwater shrimp habitat mitigation features; known nest trees of special-status raptors that are planned for removal will be evaluated and their removal will be avoided or mitigated; disturbance of riparian habitat will be avoided, minimized or mitigated and riparian habitat will be restored; and impacts to dusky-footed woodrat houses will be avoided or mitigated. Additional mitigation measures include creating cover for small and medium-sized mammals and avoiding clearing of black-tailed deer fawning habitat.

Cultural Resources: There is some potential for construction activities to impact archeological resources and human remains. However, OVOK Project activities are not expected to have a significant adverse effect because the following mitigation measures will be implemented: archaeological investigations near known archaeological sites will be conducted prior to ground-breaking; a qualified archaeologist and a Native American representative will be on-site to monitor site preparation and construction activities; work will be stopped if cultural resources are discovered during project activities; and human remains, if discovered, will be protected consistent with California State law.

Traffic and Transportation: Although it would generate a comparatively small number of vehicle trips, OVOK Project construction nonetheless has the potential to make a cumulatively considerable contribution to traffic flow in the county. To minimize these impacts, Napa County will require the construction contractor to prepare and adhere to a traffic control plan (TCP). The TCP requires construction-related vehicles and equipment to travel outside of peak hours on congested roadway segments to the maximum extent feasible and ensures coordination with the County to design a congested intersection avoidance strategy.

In addition to mitigation measures, the IS/MND identifies several environmental commitments that have been adopted to reduce or avoid adverse effects that could result from OVOK Project construction, maintenance, or operation. General environmental commitments include: work windows restricting construction to between June 15 and October 15; minimizing the area of disturbance, erosion and sediment control measures; dust management controls and air quality protection; staging and stockpiling materials on areas that are already compacted; restricting stream access routes and encroachment into the stream; proper labeling, storage and disposal of on-site hazardous materials; removal and disposal of hazardous materials encountered on site; prevention of accidental releases of hazardous materials; proper maintenance and fueling vehicles and equipment; planning for pedestrians, traffic flow, and safety measures; public safety measures; minimization of noise disturbances to residential areas; and work site housekeeping. Biological resources environmental commitments include: minimizing impacts to nesting birds; avoiding impacts to vernal pool fairy shrimp; protection of sensitive species from herbicide use;

avoiding and minimizing impacts to special-status plant, amphibian and reptile species; protection of bat colonies and mammal dens; and protection of fish and other aquatic species during instream construction and channel dewatering. Geology and soils environmental commitments include: berm configuration, surface drainage and maintenance; site preparation; and fill materials and placement. The environmental commitments will be incorporated into construction documents prepared for the OVOK Project and will thus be contractually required of all construction contractors.

The County of Napa has prepared a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Exhibit 4) for the Napa River Oakville to Oak Knoll Restoration Project.

Staff believes that the specified mitigation measures reduce any potentially significant effects to a level of insignificance. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the OVOK Project, as mitigated, will not have a significant effect on the environment. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination.